

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY SAIGON

COMUSSAG

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 10670

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: MILI, CB

SUBJ: NATIONAL CONSCRIPTION

REF: PHNOM PENH 10598

1. THE NEW NATIONAL CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN HAS NOW BEEN LAUNCHED WITH A RADIO ADDRESS TO THE NATION BY THE PRESIDENT AND A JOINT ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE MINISTRIES OF INTERIOR AND DEFENSE. AS COULD BE EXPECTED THERE HAS BEEN SOME LACK OF COORDINATION, GUN JUMPING AND STALLING IN THIS FIRST STAGE OF THE CAMPAIGN, BUT HOPEFULLY MATTERS WILL BE STRAIGHTENED OUT WHEN MG THAPPANA NGINN GETS HIS JOINING STAFF FULLY IN OPERATION (PARA 4 REFTEL).

2. THE PROGRAM AS SET FORTH BY THAPPANA NGINN TO US IN A MEETING OCTOBER 1 CALLS FOR THE PRESIDENT'S
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SPEECH TO BE FOLLOWED BY A PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN USING THE RADIO, TELEVISION, PRESS, AND ALL THE FACILITIES

OF THE POLITICAL WARFARE DIRECTORATE AND STARRING TOP POLITICAL LEADERS AND WELL KNOWN ENTERTAINERS. CONCURRENT WITH THE PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN THERE IS TO BE A REGISTRATION OF ELIGIBLE MALES. THE ACTUAL INDUCTIONS ARE TO FOLLOW IN THE LATTER HALF OF THE MONTH AFTER THE SCENE HAS BEEN SET.

3. THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH, WHICH WAS BROADCAST AT NOON TODAY, WAS SHORT AND, WE BELIEVE REASONABLY EFFECTIVE. AFTER OUTLINING THE "VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST" THREAT IN MUCH THE SAME TERMS AS HIS OCTOBER 1 ADDRESS TO THE NATION (PARA 5 REFTTEL, LON NOL NOTED THAT NATIONAL CONSCRIPTION HAS NOW BEEN LEGALLY INSTITUTED IN CAMBODIA AS IN MOST OTHER NATIONS AND APPEALED TO THOSE BETWEEN 18 AND 35 TO REGISTER FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF NTIONAL SERVICE. HE ADDED THAT DRAFTEES WILL BE DRAWN FIRST FROM THE 18 TO 25 AGE GROUP.

4. A JOINT INTERIOR-DEFENSE ANNOUNCEMENT OUTLINING THE METHOD OF REGISTERING WAS BROADCAST PRIOR TO THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS. THIS STATEMENT EXPLAINED THAT THE GENERAL MOBILIZATION NETWORK WILL BE EMPLOYED FOR REGISTRATION, THAT SPECIAL JOINT POLICE-GENDARMERIE OFFICER WILL BE SET TO HEAR CITIZENS' COMPLAINTS, AND THAT ELIGIBLE NOT REGISTERING WITHIN 10 DAYS OF WRITTEN NOTIFICATION (FOR WHICH NO DATE WAS SPECIFIED) WOULD BE TAKEN BY THE GENERAL MOBILIZATION UNITS TO THE NATIONAL POLICE. THE ANNOUNCEMENT SPECIFIED THE BENEFITS STUDENTS AND OTHERS WOULD RECEIVE FOR VOLUNTEERING FOR SERVICE IN THE NATIONAL RESERVE AND NOTED THAT GENERAL MOBILIZATION UNITS WOULD BE REWARDED FOR GOOD SERVICE AND PUNISHED IF THEY FAIL TO CARRY OUT THEIR DUTIES.

5. A SERIOUS WEAKNESS IN THE SYSTEM IS ITS RELIANCE ON THE GENERAL MOBILIZATION STRUCTURE (WHICH WE BELIEVE IS THE PRESIDENT'S IDEA). THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE IN REGARD TO THE PROVISION THAT PERSONS MAY BE GRANTED DEFERRALS AND STRICKEN FROM THE REGISTRATION ON PRESENTING PROPER
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PROOF TO GENERAL MOBILIZATION OFFICIALS (I.E. CHIEFS OF TEN-HOUSE AND 50-HOUSE UNITS). WE VERIFIED FROM PHNOM PENH GOVERNOR UN TRAMUCH TODAY THAT THIS IS INDEED THE PROCEDURE CONTEMPLATED, AND WE COUNSELED STRONGLY AGAINST IT NOTING THE INABILITY AND UNWILLINGNESS OF SUCH LOW LEVEL OFFICIALS TO CHALLENGE FALSE DOCUMENTATION. WE RECOMMENDED THAT REGISTRATION AND THE GRANTING OF DEFERRALS BE SEPARATED (AS THAPPANA NGINN EARLIER LED US TO BELIEVE THEY WOULD BE) AND THAT THE LATTER BE EXECUTED LATER BY EXAMINATION BOARDS AS

SPECIFIED IN THE LAW. HE PROMISED TO PUT FORWARD THESE CHANGES IN THE FIRST MEETING OF THAPPANA NHINN'S JOINT STAFF SCHEDULED FOR THIS MORNING.

6. MISSING FROM THE CAMPAIGN PACKAGE AT THIS TIME IS THE FREE RICE RATION FOR GENERAL RESERVE TROOPS. DESPITE EARLIER HIGH LEVEL ASSURANCES THAT THIS WOULD BE FUNDED FROM THE CURRENT DEFENSE BUDGET, WE LEARNED IN A MEETING WITH THAPPANA NGINN, ACTING MINISTER OF FINANCE KHY TAING LIN AND DEFENSE OFFICIALS YEASTERDAY THAT APPROPRIATE STEPS HAD NOT BEEN TAKEN TO ALLOCATE FUNDS BECAUSE OF CONFLICTING DEMANDS APPROVED BY THE PRESIDENT. THEY PROMISED, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WOULD SEEK LON NOL'S APPROVAL IMMEDIATELY FOR THE FREE RICE RATION.
ENDERS

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